DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 192 189 CG 014 641

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TITLE Social Consequences of Teenage Childbearing.
INSTITUTION National Technical Information Service (DOC), Springfield, Va.
SPONS AGENCY National Institutes of Health (DHEW), Bethesda, Md.
REPORT NO SHR-003170
PUB DATE Oct 75
CONTRACT NO1-HD-2-2038
NOTE 36p.: Best copy available. Presented at Conference on the Consequences of Adolescent Pregnancy and Childbearing (Bethesda, MD, October 29-30, 1975).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescents: *Age Differences: Behavior Patterns: *Birth: Expectation: Females: *Life Style: Mother Attitudes: *Mothers: Occupational Aspiration: *Unwed Mothers

ABSTRACT

Most research on teenage parenthood is concerned with illegitimacy and its determinants such as attitudes toward sex, contraceptive knowledge and practice, family relationships, and cultural factors. Empirical studies on the consequences of illegitimacy are generally limited to problems of recidivism, school dropouts, and welfare dependency. Whether getting married when very young because of pregnancy is more socially advantageous than being an unmarried parent has never been rigorously demonstrated. In initial and follow-up interviews, women who had their first births when they were teenagers were compared to women in their twenties at the time of first birth to examine differences in role aspirations and behavior. Teenage mothers: (1) were less likely to plan the timing of motherhood: (2) found that the onset of childrearing responsibilities had a limiting effect on their role activities: (3) were less likely to realize their work aspirations: and (4) differed from older mothers in that a substantial proportion wanted no more than one child, and a sizeable group wanted four or more children. (Author/HLM)

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SHR-0003170

Social Consequences of Teenage Childbearing

National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, MD

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Oct 75

CG 014641

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INFORMATION SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
SPRINGFIELD, VA. 22161

DOCUMENT INFORMATION SHEET

REPORT NUMBER
SHR-0003170

TITLE
Social Consequences of Teenage Childbearing.

REPORT DATE
Oct 75

AUTHOR
Harriet B. Presser

PERFORMING ORGANIZATION, NUMBER & NAME
NA

CONTRACT-GRANT NUMBER
N01-HD-2-2038

SPONSORING ORGANIZATION
National Inst. of Health, Rockville, MD.

NOTES
Presented at the Conference on the Consequences of Adolescent Pregnancy and Childbearing in Bethesda, Md., October 29 and 30, 1975.

AVAILABILITY
UNLIMITED

PAGES
0035p

PRICE
PC A03/MF A01

SHR-0003170

SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF TEENAGE CHILDBEARING*

Harriet B. Presser

There is remarkable consensus in this country that teenage childbearing constitutes a serious social problem. Implicitly, the assumption is that there are negative social consequences of early parenthood that could be averted if teenagers were to postpone having children until their twenties. Although this may be true, there is surprisingly little empirical evidence to justify this position.

Most of the research on teenage parenthood is concerned with illegitimacy, although only about one-third of teenage mothers are unmarried at the time of birth (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1975: Table 1-32). Many of these studies focus on the determinants of illegitimacy, such as attitudes toward sex, contraceptive knowledge and practice, family relationships, and cultural factors (c.f., Vincent, 1961; Roberts, 1966; Furstenberg, 1971; and Rains, 1971). Empirical studies on the consequences of illegitimacy are generally limited to the problems of recidivism, school drop-outs, and welfare dependency (c.f., Pakter, et al., 1961; Stine, et al., 1964; Crumidy and Jacobziner, 1966; Sarrell and Davis, 1966; Currie, et al., 1972; Foltz, et al., 1972; and Jekel, et al., 1973). An important exception is the recent study by Furstenberg (1975) which looks at a variety of social consequences of early adolescent childbearing (ages 15 to 17).

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*Paper presented at the Conference on the Consequences of Adolescent Pregnancy and Childbearing, held in Bethesda, Maryland, October 29 and 30, 1975. The research upon which this paper is based was performed pursuant to Contract No. NO1-HD-2-2038 with the National Institutes of Health, DHEW. The field work for the reinterview was funded by The Population Council. The author gratefully acknowledges the research assistance of Katherine Brown and Liliane Floge, and the computer programming assistance of Pi-Yu Ting.

Although based on a clinic sample (as are most studies of illegitimacy), this study is longitudinal and includes a comparison with female classmates five years later. Furstenberg (1975:343) concludes that there is "a sharp and regular pattern of differences in the marital, fertility, educational, and occupational careers of the young mothers and the classmates." The classmates were more successful in realizing their aspirations than were the young mothers.[1]

Furstenberg's study is also distinctive in interviewing fathers and children some years after the study began. The men were extremely difficult to locate, which may explain why there are so few studies on unmarried fathers (Vincent, 1960; Pannor, et al., 1971). They are, nevertheless, an important population to study in order to fully grasp both the determinants and consequences of early parenthood.

Teenagers who choose to marry rather than have an illegitimate child (or an abortion) may experience negative social consequences as well. Premarital conceptions appear to be associated with economic difficulty and shorter birth intervals (Freedman and Coombs, 1966a and 1966b), as well as high rates of separation and divorce (Monahan, 1960). Whether getting married when very young because of pregnancy (and in lieu of an abortion) is socially more advantageous than being an unmarried mother (or father) has never been rigorously demonstrated. It is difficult to assess what people would have done with their child-free time had they not become parents when they did.

In this paper, we shall present some of the findings from our study of women who recently became mothers in New York City. We shall compare women who had their first births when they were teenagers with women who were in their

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[1] Dr. Furstenberg will be summarizing the findings of his study in some detail at this conference.

twenties, and look at differences in their role aspirations and behavior. Our time perspective is limited, but our data do permit age comparisons that should be revealing. Before proceeding with the analysis, we shall briefly describe the sample.

Nature of the Sample

The sample was designed so that we could study the determinants and early consequences of the age at which women have their first birth, focusing on the roles of women. It is a representative sample of 408 women drawn from the birth records of women residing in three boroughs of New York City (Brooklyn, the Bronx and Queens) who had their first child in July of 1970, 1971 or 1972. Only women who were born on the mainland United States were eligible; this excluded first-generation migrants from Puerto Rico and elsewhere. Nonwhites other than blacks were excluded. Women whose first birth was a twin were considered ineligible, as were women whose first child was not residing with them. About 90 percent of first births in New York City occur to women aged 15-29, and our sample was restricted to this group of mothers.

Among the total of New York City mothers meeting the above sampling criteria, 38 percent were black and 30 percent of all first births were illegitimate. This population was stratified by race of mother and legitimacy status of the child (as well as by age at first birth) so that the sample would be representative in this regard. Women were not proportionately drawn into the sample, however, by year of first birth. The sample was designed to include about 25 percent whose first birth was in July 1970, about 25 percent in July 1971 and about 50 percent in July 1972. (A major consideration here was the difficulty in locating women whose addresses, obtained

from the birth records, were over a year old.) Women were interviewed in person during the period January 15-March 14, 1973. For about one-half of the sample, then, their first child was about seven months old at the time the mother was interviewed; the remainder of the sample was divided between those whose first child was about one-and-one-half years old and those whose first child was about two-and-one-half years old at the time of the interview.

Personal interviews were conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC). We systematically put 709 cases into the field, of which 541 were located eligible cases. Seventy-six percent (408) of these eligible cases were interviewed.[1] Women who participated in the first interview were re-interviewed approximately one year later (February 1974), regardless of whether or not they were still residing in New York City. Again, NORC conducted the field work. We were able to locate and reinterview 358 women, or 88 percent of 408. Most of the reinterviews were by telephone (85 percent), but re-interviews were also conducted in person if a woman could not be reached by telephone (15 percent).

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[1]For a detailed breakdown of those not interviewed, and an evaluation of the reliability of the data, see Presser (1974a). There was minimal selective bias among those initially interviewed (determined by an analysis of birth record data) and among those reinterviewed (determined by an analysis of the first interview).

Teenage Childbearing and Women's Roles

We shall begin by considering the role accomplishments of women in our sample prior to motherhood. As may be seen in Table 1, the majority of women were married when they became mothers (72 percent), most had graduated high school (72 percent), and most had been in the labor force (74 percent).[1] There was, however, considerable variation in role accomplishments by mother's age at first birth. The younger the woman at the time her first child was born, the less likely she was to have achieved in these roles. This is especially true of teenage mothers:[2] only 39 percent were married, 33 percent had graduated high school, and 39 percent had worked -- suggesting that a first birth at a relatively young age has a restricting effect on women's role achievements.

This suggestion, however, assumes that women with early first births for the most part are not deliberately choosing early motherhood as an alternative to other role behavior, and would have otherwise accomplished more: marriage, higher education, and more work experience. It also assumes that young mothers will not eventually "catch up" with older mothers after their child is born. We cannot directly test these notions, but we can consider differences by mother's age at first birth in how they approach the mother role, such as their family size desires just before they became pregnant and the planning status of their first birth. We also have data on the role aspirations of women regarding marriage, school, and work. We shall assess some of the early consequences of teenage childbearing taking these aspirations into account as well as the role behavior of women after their first child was born.

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[1] Only jobs in which women worked at least six months (part-time or full-time) are included.

[2] "Teenage mothers" is used throughout this paper to refer to women who had their first birth at age 15 to 19; some were no longer teenagers at the time of the survey.

The Onset of Motherhood

Women were asked retrospectively whether, just before they became pregnant with their first child, they had any idea how many children they wanted to have altogether. Over 92 percent of the women said they did, and there was little variation by age at first birth. As shown in Table 2, the majority of women wanted either two (38 percent) or three children (24 percent). There was little difference by age at first birth in family size desires just prior to pregnancy.[1] This suggests that women did not start their families earlier because they wanted larger families.

Supporting this view is the fact that only 20 percent of teenage mothers in our study planned the birth of their first child.[2] This may be contrasted with 44 percent for mothers aged 20 to 23 at their first birth, and 70 percent for mothers aged 24 to 29 ($p < .05$). It is noteworthy that the majority of all first births in our sample were unplanned -- 56 percent. An unplanned birth does not necessarily mean that women did not want to become mothers, but it does suggest that they were not highly motivated toward assuming the mother role at that time.

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[1] Family size desires at age 16 (retrospectively reported) are also not related to age at first birth. In addition, we found that the older the mother at the time of first birth, the more likely she was to have most wanted at age 16 to be a housewife or mother rather than to have a specific occupation (see Presser, 1974b).

[2] Planning status was determined by asking respondents whether contraception was consistently practiced during the month the woman became pregnant with her first child, and if contraception was not employed, the reason or reasons. A card listing several possible reasons was provided; it included an "other" category in which additional reasons could be volunteered. First births to women who indicated that at least one of the reasons that they did not use contraception was that they were trying to have a baby (a specified option) were classified as planned. All other first births were classified as unplanned. For a distribution of other reasons stated for not using contraception, see Presser, 1974a.

"Non-planners" did, however, choose not to abort the pregnancy (a legal option for three-fourths of the women -- those who had their first birth in 1971 or 1972) or put the child up for adoption. Thus, once pregnant, they acceptec the onset of motherhood relative to the alternatives.

Teenage mothers, it may be recalled, were predominantly unmarried mothers (see Table 1). For an unmarried woman who becomes pregnant and does not want an abortion, and prefers to keep the child, it is not altogether clear that she would benefit by marrying the father of the child. Although almost all of the unmarried mothers in our study wanted to get married at some future time, over one-half (52 percent) said that when they learned they were pregnant, they did not want to marry the child's father; most gave cogent reasons why not: he was irresponsible, a drug addict, an alcoholic, and so forth. Had they married, they may have been divorced or separated shortly thereafter. This remains to be tested.

There is some evidence from our study that fathers who were not married to the mother at the time of the child's birth were less educated than fathers married to the mother at this time. For births occurring to teenage mothers, 51 percent of the unmarried fathers were not high school graduates in contrast to 34 percent of the married fathers ($p > .05$). Although not a substantial difference, this suggests that many of the unmarried mothers may not have found much economic benefit from marriage.

In sum, the context in which teenagers became mothers appears to be different from those who postponed their first birth in that teenagers were more likely to enter this role unintentionally (at that time) and be unmarried. They did not differ in their family size desires before pregnancy. Being young, teenage mothers may subsequently experience the consequences of an untimely birth to a greater extent than older women. We turn now to a consideration of how age at first birth may relate to the educational aspirations and achievements of women.

Education

We noted earlier that women who had an early first birth were those most likely not to have graduated high school: only 33 percent of the teenage mothers had done so (see Table 1). It is difficult to assess the extent to which pregnancy and subsequent childrearing are directly responsible for low educational attainment, but our study provides an opportunity to examine some relationships.

Thirteen percent of the mothers in our study were attending school at the time of the first interview -- that is, when their first child was between 7 months and 2-1/2 years old. The younger the mother, the more likely she was to be currently attending school: 25 percent of the teenage mothers were in school, in contrast to 7 percent of those aged 20 to 23 at first birth and 6 percent of those aged 24 to 29 ($p < .05$). The figure for teenage mothers is impressive when considering that many were unmarried and of low economic status, but our data suggest that many more would have been going to school had they postponed their first birth.[1]

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[1] The Board of Education's policy in New York City is to provide several options for pregnant teenagers in high school. The statement issued in 1968 to superintendents and secondary school principals remains in effect today:

> "These girls should be permitted to remain in their regular school program as long as their physical and emotional condition permits. An individual decision is necessary to determine what is in the best interest of each student found to be pregnant. The girl's parents and physician should be consulted in developing the educational plan to fit her needs. If she is a short time away from completing the term's work or from graduation, and, if her physician advises that she may attend classes, she should be encouraged to continue at her home school. Should this consultation lead to the conclusion that continued attendance at the home school may be detrimental to her physical or mental well-being, she should be transferred to one of the special centers or other suitable arrangements should be made for continuing her education. As in other school matters, the final decision will rest upon the good judgment of the principal of the home school who will consider all the factors involved." Special Circular No. 10, 1968-1969, Board of Education of the City of New York, September 27, 1968.

Women who were not currently attending school at the time of the first interview were asked the main reason they stopped going to school. Eleven percent said it was because they had become pregnant. For teenage mothers, the percent is 36, as compared with only 3 percent for those aged 20 to 23 and 1 percent for those aged 24 to 29 ($p < .05$). Those in their early teens at first birth seem to have been most at risk of dropping out of school because of the pregnancy. For teenage mothers not currently in school, the percent who stopped going to school because they became pregnant by specific age is as follows:

15 & 16:	74% (19)
17:	38% (21)
18:	28% (25)
19:	19% (32)

Almost two-thirds of teenage mothers not currently in school did not graduate high school, and of these 60 non-graduates about one-half (47 percent) said the main reason for leaving school was the pregnancy. The next most common main reason was that they did not like school (18 percent).

Further indication that pregnancy may have restricted the educational attainment of many teenage mothers is provided by data on educational aspirations just prior to motherhood. Women not currently enrolled in school were asked retrospectively if, just before they had their first child, they had gone as far in school as they wanted to go, or whether they had wanted to go further. As shown in Table 3, teenage mothers who were not high school graduates were less likely to say they went as far as they wanted (17 percent) than high school graduates (29 percent). It may also be noted in this table that, among teenage mothers, those who were not high school graduates were somewhat more likely to be attending school after their first birth (27 percent) than high school graduates (20 percent).

Not only were women who became mothers in their teens more likely to be attending school soon after their first birth than older mothers, but of those not

attending school, teenage mothers were more likely than older mothers to say that prior to their first birth they wanted to go further in school: 71 percent of the women aged 15 to 19 at first birth indicated further educational aspirations, as compared with 42 percent of those aged 20 to 23, and 43 percent of those aged 24 to 29 ($p < .05$). This does not, of course, necessarily mean that younger mothers wanted to achieve a higher level of educational attainment than older mothers: their educational attainment prior to motherhood was substantially lower. It may be seen in Table 4 that if the educational aspirations of mothers not currently attending school were in fact achieved, teenage mothers would still be less educated than older mothers. Having a child early certainly cannot explain all the variation in educational attainment, although having more child-free time might have raised the educational aspirations of some teenage mothers. It may be noted in Table 4 that, for those not currently in school, there is little difference in the level of educational aspiration between women who became mothers in their early rather than late twenties.

What happens to the educational aspirations of women after the birth of the first child? Women not currently enrolled in school at the time of the first interview were asked whether their plans now were to go back to school; if so, they were asked whether they planned to do so within the next few years. Over half of the women (52 percent) said they planned to go back to school sometime; 81 percent of these women were planning to go back within five years.

As may be seen in Table 5, teenage mothers were more likely to plan to go back to school than older mothers. This is especially characteristic of those who before their first birth wanted to go further in school: 78 percent of these teenage mothers planned to go back to school within five years. There is a positive relationship for all age groups between educational aspirations before the first birth and current plans (after the first birth) to return to school. It should be

noted, however, that for each age group there is a substantial minority of women who before their first birth felt they had gone to school as far as they wanted but after having a child, planned to go back to school. Correspondingly, there are some women who previously wanted to go further in school but, after having a child, did not plan to ever go back. Although both sets of responses are in the minority, they do suggest that the first birth for some women may alter their educational ambitions.

Employment

Three-fourths of the women in our study had worked outside the home prior to their first birth (see Table 1). The older the woman, the more years she had had in which to work. Accordingly, employment before the first birth was more characteristic of women who became mothers when they were 20 to 23 (84 percent) or 24 to 29 (98 percent) than 15 to 19 (39 percent).[1]

Of the women who worked before their first birth, over three-fourths (78 percent) were employed after they became pregnant. Seventy-two percent of teenage mothers who worked before their first birth worked within nine months preceding the birth, as compared to 74 percent for mothers aged 20 to 23 at first birth, and 84 percent for mothers aged 24 to 29 ($p > .05$). In other words, given work experience prior to motherhood, teenage mothers were only somewhat less likely to have worked during pregnancy than older mothers.

Shortly after the first birth, teenage mothers were less likely to be working than older mothers. The percent employed when the first child was 7 months old by age at first birth was as follows ($p < .05$):

15 to 19:	10%
20 to 23:	13%
24 to 29:	22%

For the total sample, 15 percent were employed at this time (9 percent full-time and 6 percent part-time). By the time the first child was 19 months old,

[1]Only jobs of at least 6 months duration are considered.

23 percent of the mothers were employed (13 percent full-time and 10 percent part-time). Again, those who became mothers in their teens were less likely to be working than those who were in their twenties. The percent employed at this time by age at first birth was as follows ($p<.05$):

15 to 19:	13%
20 to 23:	23%
24 to 29:	32%

As we have seen, many women were going to school soon after their first birth, especially those who became mothers in their teens. To what extent does school attendance explain the lower employment rates of women with such early first births? Focusing on the time of the first interview (when the first child was between 7 months old and 2 years and 7 months old),[1] we may consider for those currently not attending school the difference by age at first birth in employment status.[2] For this subgroup, only 9 percent of those aged 15 to 19 at first birth were employed, as compared to 16 percent of those aged 20 to 23, and 24 percent of those aged 24 to 29 ($p<.05$). It appears, then, that school attendance does not explain the lower employment rates after the first birth of women who became mothers in their teens.

The lack of work experience or occupational skills necessary to obtain a reasonably well-paying job may be an alternative explanation. Work experience prior to the first birth is highly correlated with work experience after the first birth, and young mothers were most likely not to have worked prior to motherhood. An analysis of only those with work experience prior to the first birth who were

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[1]We are considering employment at the time of first interview rather than at a specific age of the child (as in the previous analysis of employment) since current school enrollment relates to the time of the first interview.

[2]Ten women were both currently attending school and employed at the same time of the first interview. These women were excluded from this analysis.

not currently in school reveals that, for this subgroup, there was little difference by age at first birth in the percent employed at the time of the first interview: 17 percent for those aged 15 to 19 at first birth, 16 percent for those aged 20 to 23, and 23 percent for those aged 24 to 29. Thus, given some work experience prior to motherhood, age at first birth does not seem to relate to employment after the first birth.[1] This suggests that the postponement of the first birth provides the opportunity for employment which, in turn, has consequences for subsequent employment. Women who become pregnant when they are employed may have a special advantage in obtaining work after the first birth (regardless of age), since often they return to the same job. Other mothers with young children may find it especially difficult to look for and obtain a new job. Previously employed women may also be more highly motivated to work soon after their first child than other women, having experienced some of the advantages of paid employment.

Women who were teenagers when they became mothers were less likely to be employed at the time of the first interview than those who were older, but they were more likely to plan to go to work soon. As shown in Table 6, among those not employed, 61 percent of teenage mothers were planning to go to work within one year, in contrast to 24 percent for those aged 20 to 23 at first birth, and 16 percent for those aged 24 to 29. It may also be noted that women who entered motherhood in their teen years rather than in their twenties were more likely to plan to work at some time in the future (only 3 percent said not at all).

To what extent do these work aspirations predict behavior? Using data from the first and second interview, we can examine work plans at the time of the

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[1] For a multivariate analysis of the determinants of female employment at 7 months and 19 months after the first birth (including age at first birth), see Presser (1975). This paper also considers the occupations of employed women.

first interview in relation to employment status at the time of the second interview -- one year later. Only 23 percent of the women who said they were planning to go back to work within a year were in fact employed at the time of the second interview. The younger the woman at first birth, the less likely she was to realize this aspiration: the percentages were 16 for those aged 15 to 19 at first birth, 24 for those aged 20 to 23, and 54 for those aged 24 to 29($p < .05$).

Public Assistance

Only a minority of mothers, as we have seen, were employed soon after their first birth. Teenage mothers were least likely to be working but most likely to be going to school. As we have also seen, teenage mothers were disproportionately unmarried at the time their child was born -- that is, many did not have husbands to help support them or their child. How, then, have they managed to survive economically?

Our data on the public assistance status of households are revealing. Women were asked to specify whether any of their household income came from public assistance or welfare, including aid to dependent children. Over one-fourth (26 percent) of the sample responded that at least some of their household income was from this source. This undoubtedly overstates the percentage of women personally receiving public assistance, but probably not by much.[1]

Age at first birth is inversely related to public assistance status: over half of teenage mothers (55 percent) were in households receiving public assistance at the time of the first interview, in contrast to 17 percent of mothers aged 20 to 23, and 9 percent of mothers aged 24 to 29 ($p < .05$).

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[1] For further discussion and an analysis of the relationship between public assistance and early family formation based on this sample of women, see Presser and Salsberg (forthcoming).

Public assistance appears to enable many women to go to school. It was teenage mothers who were most likely to be enrolled and it was teenage mothers who were disproportionately in public assistance households. Seventy-five percent of the teenage mothers who were going to school were in households receiving public assistance.

Looking at the relationship in the reverse direction, it may be seen in Table 7 that, both for the total sample and for teenage mothers specifically, public assistance status does not differentiate the proportion of women who were home full time: about two-thirds for both groups. It does, however, differentiat between work and school. Of the remaining one-third, school attendance was the more prevalent activity for recipients and employment was more characteristic of nonrecipients.

Motherhood After the First Birth

We have seen that the majority of women soon after their first birth did not work or go to school; they were full-time homemakers supported by their husbands, families, and/or public assistance. Many dropped out of school because the became pregnant with their first child (especially teenagers who were still in hig school) and many dropped out of the labor force or never had a chance to enter. The educational aspirations of those not in school was much beyond what we would realistically expect them to achieve, now that they were mothers. Almost all women planned to go (back) to work, and we can expect most will -- although not as soon as they expect to do so. Given these and other alterations in their day-to-day lives, how does the "reality shock" of motherhood affect women's family size desires and subsequent fertility, and are there differences in effect by age at first birth? Data from both the first and second interview are revealing in this regard.

We previously reported the family size desires of women just before they

became pregnant with their first child (see Table 2). Comparing those desires with the desires women said they now had (at the time of the first interview, when the first child was between 7 months and 2-1/2 years old), we find that about one-fourth of the women indicated a change. Twenty-one percent reportedly wanted fewer children and only 3 percent wanted more; 67 percent wanted the same number, and 9 percent had no idea at one or both interviews. There was, however, no strong relationship between change in family size desire during this period and age at first birth, even when controlling for the age of the first child.

The reinterview permits us to examine changes in family size desires one year after the first interview and we need not rely on recall for either time period. Less than one-half of the women (48 percent) gave the same response at both interviews. Again, the shift is toward smaller families. Twenty-nine percent of the reinterview sample decreased their family size desires. There was, however, a shift toward larger families among 17 percent of the sample. Although teenage mothers were most likely to change their family size desires during this interval -- both lower and higher -- differences by age at first birth were not substantial.

Between pregnancy and the time of the second interview, however, the absolute number of children desired by women declined markedly. Whereas just before women were pregnant with their first birth only 8 percent wanted less than two children (see Table 2), at the second interview 17 percent indicated this preference (Table 8). The two-child family, however, remained the most popular and was especially preferred by women who had their first birth in their late twenties. Those who became mothers in their teens were most likely to prefer very small families (less than two children) and large families (four children or more), and differed notably in the disribution of family size desires from women who were older at first birth. Shifts in family size desires between pregnancy and the

second interview thus seem to have had a differential effect by age at first birth.

We have been looking at attitudinal changes, but what about differences in behavior? Is there a difference by age at first birth in subsequent fertility? We can examine this question with regard to the spacing of the second child. By the time of the second interview, the interval since the first birth was at least 19 months for all the women in our study. Twelve percent of the mothers had their second child less than 19 months after their first. Teenage mothers did not differ, however, from women aged 20 to 23: for both, 14 percent had their second child within this interval, but only 7 percent of the women aged 24 to 29 had a second child by this time ($p > .05$).

It is important to note that we have been looking at a relatively short time span since the first birth. The long-term consequences of early motherhood on subsequent fertility may be substantial. We expect that those who began childbearing as teenagers will have larger completed families than older mothers. This may be so not only because they will have had more reproductive time to do so, but because their role options over the reproductive span will be relatively narrow. A third interview of this sample planned for 1976 (two years after the second interview) should be revealing in this regard.

Conclusions and Suggested Research

We have seen that teenage mothers approached motherhood with similar family size desires as women who were older at first birth, but they were less likely to plan the timing of motherhood. Being young, teenage mothers had less time than older mothers to find a suitable husband, to go to school, or to work before their first child was born. Almost all of those who were unmarried wanted to marry, although not necessarily the father of their child. Many teenage mothers indicated they had wanted to go further in school before they became pregnant. These findings suggest that, given more child-free time, some of these women would have accomplished more in terms of marriage and education prior to their first birth. It would also have given them more opportunity to work prior to motherhood. To the extent that marriage, school, and work are socially advantageous to women, and women want to achieve in these roles, our data indicate there are negative social consequences resulting from early motherhood.

The findings support the general view that the onset of childrearing responsibilities has a restricting effect on the role activities of women. Many women dropped out of school or out of the labor force when they became mothers; some never had a chance to work. Most women became full-time homemakers. A minority of mothers were in school or working soon after their child was born, revealing their high level of motivation and/or economic need. Teenage mothers were more likely to be in school than older mothers, but less likely to be employed. They were also more likely to plan to go back to school or to work. As we have seen, however, their work plans were not good predictors of their behavior. Teenage mothers were more likely than women who became mothers in their twenties not to realize their work aspirations a year later.

Between pregnancy and the time of the second interview, the family size desires of mothers changed considerably -- more downward than upward. At the

time of the second interview, teenage mothers differed from older mothers in that a substantial proportion wanted no more than one child and a sizeable group wanted four or more. Preference for two and three children was more characteristic of older than younger mothers. The wider dispersion of family size desires among teenage mothers suggests that their ability to cope with children, given their current life style, may be more variable.

This paper has focused on a selected aspect of the social consequences of teenage childbearing -- its relationship to the role aspirations and behavior of women. We have also focused on a limited time span after the first birth. There is a need for further research that examines the long-term consequences of teenage childbearing, comparing teenage mothers not only with older mothers, but with women of similar age who have not (yet) had children.

Although we have been looking at some of the consequences of teenage childbearing, the consequences of teenage pregnancy followed by abortion need further study. Teenagers who abort are generally postponing their first birth: how does this affect their subsequent role behavior? And what about women who have a child but give it up for adoption: how do they compare with unmarried mothers who keep their child? It may also be noted that, with the liberalization of abortion laws, unmarried women who choose to have a child may be becoming an increasingly selective group. They may be women who have especially low educational and occupational aspirations.

Role aspirations may reflect motivation, but they also reflect the actual opportunity structure for achievement. We need to explore the interrelationships between aspirations and structural opportunities with better measures than are currently available. How does the restriction of opportunities outside the family affect women's attitudes toward motherhood?

A related issue of critical importance is the unmet need for child care among women with young children. Whatever the reasons for early childbearing, the consequences for women's roles may be minimized by providing good child care facilities. Our study indicates that mothers who are going to school or working depend primarily on their family and babysitters for child care (most of the children are too young for day care centers). To what extent are women not currently in school or working prevented from doing so because they cannot satisfactorily arrange for child care or cannot afford it?

We also need to study how women are affected by the experience of child-rearing, and how this may vary by the age of mother. Children may have quite a socializing effect on attitudes toward motherhood and other roles.

A final plea is for more studies on fatherhood, including unmarried fatherhood. The consequences of early fatherhood for men, women, and children need to be researched.

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Table 1. Percent of New York City Mothers Who by the Time of Their First Birth Had Graduated High School, Worked, and Were Married, Separately According to Age at First Birth

	Total (N=408)	Age at First Birth		
		15-19 (N=129)	20-23 (N=154)	24-29 (N=125)
Percent who were married at time of first birth	72	39	84	92
Percent who graduated high school before first birth	72	33	87	94
Percent who worked before first birth[1]	74	39	84	98

[1] Only jobs of at least six months duration are included.

Table 2. Percent Distribution of New York City Mothers By Family Size Desires Just Before Pregnant With First Child According to Age at First Birth

Family Size Desires Just Before Pregnant With First Child	Total	Age at First Birth		
		15-19	20-23	24-29
0,1	8	10	8	5
2	38	38	34	43
3	24	20	25	26
4	15	12	18	15
5+	8	12	7	5
No Idea	7	8	8	6
Total Percent (No. of cases)	100 (408)	100 (129)	100 (154)	100 (125)
Mean Number of Children Desired[1] (No. of cases)	2.8 (377)	2.9 (118)	2.9 (142)	2.7 (117)

$x^2 = 10.48$; $p > .05$[1]

[1]Excludes women who had no idea.

Table 3. Percent Distribution of New York City Mothers Aged 15 to 19 at Time of First Birth By Educational Aspirations Just Before First Birth According to Current School Attendance Status and Whether or Not Graduated High School

Current School Attendance Status and Educational Aspirations Just Before First Birth	Total	Whether or Not High School Graduate	
		Yes	No
Not currently attending school			
Went as far as wanted	21	29	17
Wanted to go further	54	51	56
Currently attending school	25	20	27
Total Percent	100	100	100
(No. of cases)	(127)	(41)	(86)

$x^2 = 2.53$; $p > .05$

Table 4. Percent Distribution of New York City Mothers Not Currently Attending School By Level of Educational Aspirations Just Before First Birth According to Age at First Birth

Level of Educational Aspirations	Total	Age at First Birth		
		15-19	20-23	24-29
12 grades[1]	21	42	8	8
13-15 grades	25	22	30	25
16 or more grades	54	36	62	67
Total Percent	100	100	100	100
(No. of cases)	(181)	(69)	(61)	(51)

$x^2 = 30.64$; $p < .05$

[1] Includes one case of less than 12 grades.

Table 5. Percent Distribution of New York City Mothers Not Currently Attending School By Whether and When They Plan to Go Back to School According to Educational Aspirations Just Before First Birth and Age at First Birth

Age at First Birth and Whether/When Plan to Go Back To School	Total	Educational Aspirations Just Before First Birth	
		Went as far as wanted	Wanted to go further
15-19			
Go back within 5 years	67	39	78
Go back after 5 years	4	7	3
Never go back	29	54	19
Total Percent	100	100	100
(No. of cases)	(96)	(28)	(68)
$\chi^2 = 13.36; p < .05$			
20-23			
Go back within 5 years	40	29	55
Go back after 5 years	10	8	12
Never go back	50	63	33
Total Percent	100	100	100
(No. of cases)	(143)	(83)	(60)
$\chi^2 = 12.26, p < .05$			
24-29			
Go back within 5 years	40	28	56
Go back after 5 years	16	9	26
Never go back	44	63	18
Total Percent	100	100	100
(No. of cases)	(117)	(67)	(50)

$x^2 = 23.69; p < .05$

Table 6. Percent Distribution of New York City Mothers Not Employed at Time of First Interview By When Planning to Go to Work According to Age at First Birth

When planning to Work	Total	Age at First Birth		
		15-19	20-23	24-29
Less than 1 year	35	61	24	16
1 to 2 years	16	18	20	9
3 to 4 years	12	10	11	16
5 years or more	26	8	32	41
Not at all	11	3	13	18
Total Percent (No. of cases)	100 (338)	100 (115)	100 (128)	100 (95)

$x^2 = 77.32$; $p < .05$

Table 7. Percent Distribution of New York City Mothers By Public Assistance Status at First Interview According to Activity Last Week, for Total Sample and For Women Aged 15 to 19 at Time of First Birth

Activity Last Week	Total	Public Assistance Status	
		Recipients	Non-Recipients
Total Sample			
Employed[1]	19	8	23
In School	9	22	4
Home Full-Time	72	69	73
Total Percent	100	100	100
(No. of cases)	(407)	(107)	(300)
$\chi^2 = 40.98$; $p < .05$			
Aged 15 to 19 at First Birth			
Employed[2]	15	9	23
In School	19	26	10
Home Full-Time	66	65	67
Total Percent	100	100	100
(No. of cases)	(128)	(70)	(58)
$x^2 = 8.10$; $p < .05$			

1 Includes 10 women who were both employed and going to school.
2 Includes 5 women who were both employed and going to school.

Table 8. Percent Distribution of New York City Mothers By Family Size Desires at Second Interview According to Age at First Birth: Reinterview Sample

Family Size Desires at Second Interview	Total	Age at First Birth		
		15-19	20-23	24-29
0,1	17	24	17	9
2	48	36	47	60
3	21	17	26	19
4+	10	17	6	9
No Idea	4	6	4	3
Total Percent	100	100	100	100
(No. of cases)	(358)	(111)	(132)	(115)
Mean Number of Children Desired[1]	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.3
(No. of cases)	(343)	(104)	(128)	(112)

$x^2 = 23.56$; $p < .05$[1]

[1] Excludes women who had no idea.

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